

the Maury Messenger

Monthly Newsletter of the Parent / Teacher Association

Home of the Cougars



March 2015

Ms. Ford takes Maury Think Tank on the Road!

by Angie Truesdale

I wanted to share some fabulous news with the Maury family. Our own Ms. Vanessa Ford was asked by Achieve (the creators of The Next Generation Science Standards and one of the creators of Common Core) to present a model elementary lesson at their Annual Leadership Conference. One elementary teacher, one middle and one high school teacher were chosen from around the country for this honor.



On February 18th in San Francisco, Ms. Ford presented a 1st grade lesson on light to a packed audience that included state leaders, Departments of Education for twenty states, and Nobel laureates.

How fortunate we are to have such talented teachers representing us nationally!

Congrats, Ms. Ford!

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Expressions From Black History Month

African-American Changemakers—

History to be Celebrated

by George Blackmon

During the month of February, Maury students learned about African-Americans who made significant contributions to history.

The month's activities culminated Friday, February 27th with a school wide assembly. Performing in front of a packed multipurpose room, the students expressed their learning in various ways—from dances by the pre-school classes to songs from the second and third graders reflecting the era of Negro Spirituals; from kindergartners' recitations of famous musicians and inventors to theatre from the fourth graders.

There were also performances by the Maury Cheerleaders and Class Act. Additionally, a slide show presentation was given by several students explaining the face jugs project done in Ms. Bomba's art class.



Upcoming Events

Maury @ the Market – March 28 7pm

PARCC Testing/Math – Grades 4 & 5 – March 24-25

PARCC Testing/Math – Grade 3 – March 26-27

Record Keeping Day – Dismissal @ 12:15 – April 3

Mathademics (Grades 3-4-5) - April 9

Spring Break – April 13-17



School-wide Morning Meetings

An Opportunity to Greet and Gather

by Norah Rabiah, Instructional Coach

Beginning in November, we began holding school-wide morning meetings during the third Wednesday of each month. The meetings are a component of the Responsive Classroom approach, a social-emotional learning program that we use at Maury in every facet of our daily work, including classroom morning meetings and the language we use when speaking with one another. The teachers and staff have already noticed positive interactions among our students at these meetings including siblings excitedly waving at each other, buddy classes supporting one another during greetings and shares, and students cheering for and encouraging one another. It has really been uplifting to see the positive energy that radiates throughout the multi-purpose room!

Each school-wide morning meeting consists of the following:

- A greeting
- A share from two classes
- An activity
- Empathy leaders and Changemakers of the month
- Rigorous Reader or First in Math recognition

We encourage all families to join us for one of the school-wide morning meetings. The meetings begin promptly at 9:05 and end by 9:30. Come sing along and join in on the fun at our next meeting on Wednesday, March 25 (one week later due to PARCC testing).

Cougar Spellers Represent at the Cluster Bee

by Norah Rabiah, Instructional Coach

After weeks of meeting with Ms. Rabiah during lunch and studying a list of hundreds of words, three Maury cougars had the opportunity to represent Maury at the Cluster Spelling Bee. On Thursday, February 26, Martin Michaels (5th-Vaugeois), Clara Schoell (5th-Duckett) and Ethan Williams (4th-Setash) competed with other students from schools in our area at the Cluster Bee at Capitol Hill Montessori at Logan School.



Clara, Ethan and Martin at the Cluster Bee

Martin, who made it to the 11th round, said, "It wasn't that complicated but it was frustrating and nerve-wracking. When it was my turn to spell *sahel* I didn't know the word so I just tried my best."

The students were required to study words from origin lists, including Arabic, Spanish, Latin and Italian. Unfortunately, our three spellers will not be moving on to the District NBC4 Bee but they will have a chance to compete again in the DC3 Spelling Bee in early June. (Note-Although Kingston Stephen (3rd-McMahon) won the school bee, only 4th and 5th graders were allowed to compete in the Cluster Bees.)

Think Tank Corner

by Vanessa Ford

There are so many studies underway in Think Tank! Take a look at each grade-level to see what they are working on right now and feel free to come and join us whenever you would like!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! The 4th Annual Think Tank and STEM Expo is coming April 28, 2015 from 6-7:45. From robots to reptiles, night-vision to live animals, this night always is a favorite! Get excited by buying your very own Think Tank Expo goods from the Maury store on the website too! All money supports our PTA!

PreSchool-Kindergarten: Our youngest students are building their very own rainforest in my classroom! Preschool and PK are focusing on the parts of the rainforest and the animals and plants that call the Rainforest home, while Kindergarten is extending that learning to looking at the way humans are impacting this important habitat. Stop by the Think Tank room to see our Rainforest grow!

1st Grade: These young scientists have just finished learning all about light-- what it goes through, what blocks it, how it moves and what it's used for. They have built inventions that change light and collaborated to solve problems using only a flashlight and mirrors! They are on to study sound next... a study where being LOUD is encouraged! They will love it! 1st grade will also continue their partnership with The Anacostia Watershed Society as part of their Junior Rice Rangers program.

2nd Grade: Ms. Bomba and I collaborated to create a study around solids and liquids that was meant to end in beautiful ice sculptures. As with many endeavors, they don't always work out as planned, so we learned lessons (like ensure a long cold snap before starting a unit) but we all, students included, reveled in the lessons we learned from failure! These students will help us figure out a better way to complete this unit next year and now we have moved on to looking how solids and liquids interact with each other. Come see their experiments hanging outside Think Tank!

3rd Grade: Environmental Engineering is the focus as our 3rd graders take on saving "Greentown", a fictional town where the frogs and plants are dying. They have been tasked with determining the cause, testing the pH of soil and water samples and making recommendations to the mayor for what needs to be done. They will then use this knowledge and apply it to real-life concerns around oil spills and other environmental disasters. 3rd grade students were also visited on Friday, February 7th by Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY) who, with his staff and members from the Boston Museum of Science, worked alongside our budding engineers to solve the problem. For a write-up about their visit, see <http://eie.org/news/us-rep-tonko-engineers-better-future> or http://legacy.mos.org/nctl/news_article.php?r=6220. 3rd graders also just started their wonderful partnership with The Anacostia Watershed Society for their Rice Rangers program. Students have planted native rice in their classrooms, will grow it over the next month and then transplant the plants into the wetlands surrounding the Anacostia!

4th Grade: Electricity and other forms of energy are the big focus right now! These students are exploring circuits, switches and energy transfer in a hands-on way! They are combining their knowledge of other forms of energy (kinetic, sound and light) with electricity and will be creating inventions that use and transfer more than one kind at a time!

5th Grade: In a collaboration with Mr. Ludes, students have explored the three main interconnected domains of ecosystems (decomposers, consumers and producers) and are looking at what is needed to keep balance within them. They will apply this to an environmental engineering challenge and then shortly after, switch their focus to chemical and physical changes. Our oldest students are now only \$1500 away from reaching their total goal of going to Space Camp!! They have worked so hard on this project. Thank you for all your support! If you know of anyone interested in providing support, they can still do so by going to www.mauryelementary.com/spacecamp.



Special Visitors

- Matt Levy, local ANC rep and pediatrician at Georgetown, will be hosting a series of community input meetings at Maury for our Single Member District starting next Thursday from 6-8pm.
- Rachelle Barrs from the ANBryce Foundation presented about their partnership with Maury and opportunities for our students: Saturday academic enrichment program at G.W. for grades 1-8 and summer camp in Madison, VA for grades 2-12. Programs are free except for a small registration fee based on a sliding scale of income.

Principal's Address

- Lottery Update: For PS3, all in-bound siblings and 8 or 9 new inbound students are getting in. For PK4, we are very close to getting our out-of-bounds siblings in (they are top of the waitlist). Results may come out a little later this year for data verification purposes.
- PARCC Assessment parent info night is Feb. 26th at 5:30pm, mainly for grades 3-5 but all are welcome. PARCC is a new, computer-based, national-level assessment that is completely aligned to the Common Core Standards.
- CAG has difficulty getting on the listserve from school. If there are messages or topics that require a quick response from her, please forward them to her email account.
- A couple of calendar corrections: Mathademics will be April 9th and Think Tank Night will be April 28th.

LSAT Budget Review

Erica Martin, LSAT co-chair, presented.

- Parent survey indicated confusion over our budget process and priorities, so they want to give a primer on the overall topic.
- DCPS budgets arrive unannounced in early spring and require a quick turnaround (sometimes 72 hours), so the LSAT needs a plan in advance.
- Maury is in a unique position because we are categorized as a small school (under 400 enrolled) but we have large class sizes, a huge waitlist, and we are at capacity with our physical space.
- This year the Chancellor is prioritizing high schools, quality academic programming across the district, and empowering males of color. Maury's needs may not be seen as a top priority.
- Reviewing our recent budget history, we lost Title I funding and our per-pupil spending has gone down due to increased enrollment. The PTA has increasingly funded more teacher's aides to mitigate budget losses.



LSAT Budget Review (continued)

- We will receive a larger staffing budget when enrollment hits 400 but we need a building addition to accommodate extra classrooms.
- Within budget parameters, the LSAT will have to decide whether to fund a third K class versus funding Think Tank and a full-time Assistant Principal.
- Maury will be required to have a part-time foreign language instructor next year, which will require additional Specials funding.
- The LSAT intends to continue utilizing staffing funds for our full-time Reading Resource position.
- CAG requested that DCPS analyze how many new in-bounds students we can expect to receive from the re-drawn boundaries that include former Gibbs students (now at Brown).

School Improvement Update

Scott Douglas, committee chair, presented.

- School Improvement committee is advocating for our Phase 2 renovation/addition to be moved up. It was initially slated for 2017 but has been pushed back.
- The addition plan includes 6 extra classrooms and an ADA-compliant elevator, to be built off the multi-purpose room.
- They are putting together an “ask” to present to the Chancellor and City Council during budget hearings, using our current and projected enrollment figures and classroom sizes as evidence of our need for an immediate addition.
- After presenting our proposal, parents can begin a letter-writing campaign to advocate. Amy Weedon reminded everyone to keep in mind, however, that many neighborhood schools (including our feeder school Eliot-Hine) have yet to receive Phase 1 renovations. We need to be tactful and mindful of competing interests.
- CAG added that because we no longer have Title 1 status we risk losing our PS-3 classes in order to make room for additional classes in upper grades. We need to tread carefully when requesting funds for the addition.
- Private funding was brought up as an option. It is unlikely in our case, though there are models for it, such as at Oyster-Adams.
- If anyone has relevant contacts, suggestions or questions please email Scott at: scdouglas@gmail.com



Staff Appreciation Update

Heather Bonome, committee chair, presented.

- The committee has been providing baked goods for staff on the 1st Monday of each month.
- Staff Appreciation Week will be May 4-8. Plans could include a luncheon, ice cream social, flowers, or massages for staff. Give your suggestions to Heather!
- Penny Wars is the traditional fundraiser, usually brings in about \$1500 but is a lot of work to coordinate. Other ideas were solicited.
- Those present agreed to continue doing Penny Wars because it is a kid favorite and accessible to all income levels but it will be changed this year so that all coins count as positive points (not just pennies), and dollars/checks count as negative points.

Fundraising Update

Franny Decker, committee chair, presented.

- The committee is now tracking monthly and yearly fundraising goals and income. Review of the data indicated that we need to up attendance at our Tunnicliff's and Argonaut fundraisers.
- Our Maury at the Nats fundraiser will take place Saturday May 9th. Tickets will be \$20.
- We need more box tops!
- We need someone to lead Mabel's Label's fundraiser. Contact Franny if interested.
- Our TEA fundraiser will take place March 9-15. Our goal is 100 orders. We get 20% back per order.
- Remember to register Maury Elementary DC on Amazon Smile.

Maury at the Market Update

Becky McGeehan and Annie Perezchica Wood, co-chairs, presented.

- We need someone to spear-head the in-school auction. Contact Becky if interested.
- We currently have \$14,000 in sponsorships and 200 auction items donated.
- Nando's is catering, Argonaut is providing beer and wine, and Matchbox is providing sweets.
- Parents can contact teachers to remind them to submit an auction offering. Only 3 have responded so far.
- Plenty of before, during, and after the auction volunteer opportunities needed.



Announcements

- Mindfulness workshop for parents will take place March 10 at 7pm. Parents Subrat Biswal and Adrienne Alcantara are working with Minds Inc. to provide programming/trainings for our staff and students and encourage parents to come out and experience the workshop.
- Corinne Cannon summarized some of the LSAT parent survey results. A majority of parents are concerned about class sizes. Many wanted clarification on the budget process. Many wanted more guidance on how to get involved as volunteers. Many want foreign language and a more streamlined mode of school-wide electronic communication. Everyone loves our strong sense of community! The LSAT will be using these results to guide their priorities for the upcoming year.
- Vanessa Ford prepared a handout detailing the funding sources for Space Camp, as well key details about dates, parent meetings, and plans for next year. This will be circulated online.

In Attendance

Rachelle Barrs, Liz Shirley, Brooke Jamison, Scott Douglas, Annie Perezchica Wood, Franny Decker, Shannon von Felden, Sandra George, Maureen Shove-Brown, Shannon Warren, Brian Alcorn, Sarah Alcorn, Antonio Evans, Melissa Ho, Paul Bevans, Scott Aaranson, Julie Aaronson, Jennifer Kemp, Adam Hais, Chantese Alston, George Blackmon, Ailena Mayo-Mills, Amber Gove, Dena Smith, Kim Longfield, Brian Pate, Michelle Phipps-Evans, Elsa Huxley, JR Ford, Emily Paterson, Erica Martin, Amy Weedon, Joe Weedon, Shauna Steele, Kristen Gustafson, Max Kieba, Chris Copetas, Jason Alcantara, Linda Samuel, Louise Yinug, Subrat Biswal, Cody Rice, Jean Kohanek, Carolyne Albert-Garvey.

Next Meeting

March 19, 2015 at 6:00 PM, Maury Multipurpose Room

